1 | *CHARLIE HEBDO*, REPUBLICAN SECULARISM AND ISLAMOPHOBIA

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The attack against *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris on 7 January 2015 took place in a context in which Islamophobia had become increasingly mainstream in France.[1] The widespread albeit uneven use of the slogan 'Je Suis Charlie' across France and the Western world represented for many an assertion of solidarity, and more specifically identification, with *Charlie Hebdo* and its championing of liberal Enlightenment and Republican values of freedom of speech. This reaction, we were told, was in response to the threat posed by Muslim extremists and terrorists. However, the boundaries between a critique of extremism and terrorism and that of Islamophobia (and anti-Muslim hate), as well as that between the defence of liberal values, Islamophobia and securitisation, have become increasingly blurry. The string of deadly attacks by those identified or self-identifying as 'Islamist' and linked to IS (however tenuous that link may be) which have taken place since in Paris, Nice and Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray have rendered them ever fuzzier. It is for this reason, and the mapping of these discourses and practices as they relate or are deployed in relation to Islam and Muslims, however loosely defined, that we employ our concepts of illiberal and liberal Islamophobia (Mondon and Winter 2017).

The illiberal articulation of Islamophobia, or 'anti-Muslim' hate, is closest to traditional racism based around exclusivist notions and concepts of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and religion, as well as identity itself, and is commonly associated with the extreme right and authoritarian treatment of minority groups and rights. Liberal Islamophobia, on the other hand, apparently rejects but in fact displaces and conceals traditional racism and overt prejudice by constructing a pseudo-progressive binary and narrative. It constructs a stereotypical notion and image of Muslim or Islamic belief and culture inherently opposed to some of the core values espoused in a mythical and essentialised culturally homogeneous, superior and enlightened West, or specific Western nation. In this fantasised

picture, the West is argued to embody progress, such as democracy, human rights, free speech, and gender and sexual equality, and, ironically, particularly in terms of the way in which Muslims were and are targeted, tolerance. Although liberal Islamophobia claims to target religion and belief (Islam) on behalf of liberalism as opposed to people (Muslims) to claim its liberal credential and non-racist defence, it does retain the same target – Muslims – as its illiberal counterpart, often under the auspices of 'culture', and is part of a long legacy of anti-Muslim hate in France and wider Europe, dating to colonialism. It can also be used to justify illiberal practices, such as the racialisation, profiling and securitisation of Muslims and Muslim communities, as the boundaries between the two are at times functional and thus blurry. Even before the attack, *Charlie Hebdo* used its satirical cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed to prove the point about a fantasised version of Islam and Muslims' 'backwardness' (recalling, in a French context, not just liberal Enlightenment Republican ideals, but racist colonial and neo-racist particularist 'cultural' discourses), in an expression of free speech.

In the aftermath of the attack, *Charlie Hebdo* appeared as a flagbearer for such a civilisational project: 'Je Suis Charlie' was the assertion that the West and France in particular identified with the magazine as its symbol or proxy for freedom of speech, and stood together in solidarity with the West and France for freedom of speech and the attack on it/them/us. However, this was accompanied by developments that would seem contradictory to the liberal values of freedom that *Charlie Hebdo* allegedly championed and to which Islamists posed a threat: securitisation, states of emergency in which civil liberties would be suspended, a crackdown on so-called 'extreme' speech and a boost for the extremists on the right. In this context, the extreme right Front National (FN), long the standard-bearer of racist hate and right-wing authoritarianism, was able to normalise itself further. By strategically embracing a liberal form of Islamophobia in defence of the Republic, the FN has now placed itself in perfect alignment with the mainstream.

This chapter will examine these developments, focusing on the rise of the FN and the mainstreaming of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate in France under the banner of liberalism. It will argue that, while Islamophobia has often taken an illiberal shape, a more mainstream, acceptable and accepted form within a liberal framework has become commonplace within the mainstream political discourse of twenty-

first century France, particularly in relation to discourses about Republicanism. It will examine such developments in light of tensions in the Republican tradition between liberalism and reactionary politics that go back to the founding of the Republic and throughout French history. These are revealed and articulated in responses to social and political crises: for example, the transformation and mainstreaming of Islamophobia in the context of and response to the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, and the debate surrounding freedom of speech, which should be seen in the context of a wider crisis of faith in democracy that lends itself to hate and scapegoating, as well as extreme-right opportunism. Finally, it will examine the development and changes to this discourse in response to attacks that followed the one on *Charlie Hebdo*.

The Republic has fallen, long live the reactionary Republic!

To understand the current situation and the normalisation, if not normalcy, of Islamophobic discourses, both liberal and illiberal, in mainstream political debates, it is essential to place the return of reactionary politics in France in a broader historical context. Since the late nineteenth century, France's history has been marred by the struggle between the Republic and its own contradictions, and reactionary ideologies and movements, such as those based on various iterations of racism. From the Dreyfus Affair and the role played by Charles Maurras' Action Française and colonialism, to the interwar fascist leagues and the failed coup of February 1934; from the Vichy Regime to the post-war nostalgic and anti-decolonisation movements, the French extreme right's virulent opposition has played a key part in defining the Republic as the progressive alternative, despite its own shortcomings and responsibility with regard to systemic racism (see Selim Nadi's chapter in this book). In this context and with more radical alternatives in disarray, the Republic was constructed as the ultimate symbol of progress in mainstream discourse, but also as the strongest barrier against the extreme right: where the Republic prevailed, it was argued, the forces of reaction would be defeated. This led, in the second half of the twentieth century, to the creation of a Republican Front against parties of the extreme right, which took its real meaning in the 1980s and 1990s as the FN began to gather momentum. The idea of a Republican Front was particularly prominent when Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the extreme right FN, reached the second round of the 2002 presidential elections. Interestingly, despite media hype

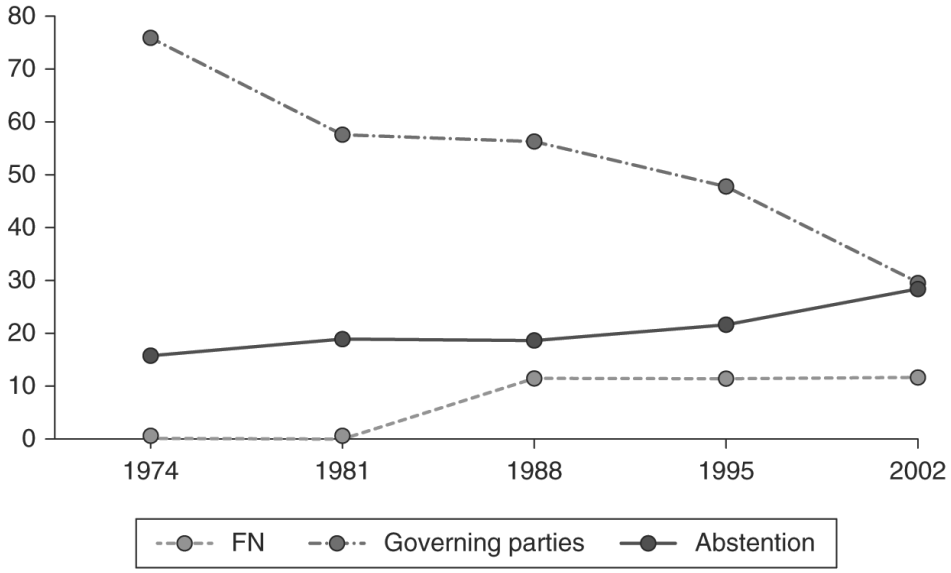

Figure 1.1 Presidential election results per registered voters

Note: Governing parties include the centre left and centre right parties.

around the rise of the FN, the novelty was not so much Le Pen's results (similar to 1988 and 1995), but the fall of the traditional governing parties and the rise of abstention (see Figure 1.1). In 2002, almost as many people turned to abstention as those who trusted the three traditional governing party families.

In an era of post-democracy (Crouch 2004), this concerning trend was for the most part ignored and solace was found in the phantasmatic fight staged by almost all parties between good and evil, between the Republic and the fascist menace.[2] In the second round, *la 'bête immonde'* was defeated and Jacques Chirac, at the time involved in various corruption scandals, was re-elected with 82.21 per cent of the vote. Here again, French commentators praised Republican unity in the face of what was advertised as the irresistible rise of the FN, once more ignoring Le Pen's party's failure to appeal to more than 17.79 per cent of voters (or 13.4 per cent of registered voters) when faced with a less than popular candidate. Left-wing newspaper *Libération*'s front pages were symptomatic of the amalgamation of extremely diverse ideologies within the Republic, stressing the vital necessity to vote for right-wing Chirac "For the Republic's sake". At the same time, popular magazine *Paris Match*'s front pages praised the 'hope' triggered by 'Republican enthusiasm' "to say no to Le Pen": 'the wounded Republic' was

ultimately victorious.[3] Apocalyptic language abounded, with words such as 'shock', 'bomb', 'catastrophe', 'nightmare' across front pages and throughout the news. *L'Express* (25 April 2002) summarised the union of the press against the FN, calling for a vote for Chirac "for France, for the Republic, for Democracy". *Le Monde* (2 May 2002) concluded that it was not so much Chirac, but 'the Republic being re-elected'. That abstention now equalled the same number of votes as the main governing parties in post-war France was ignored in the mainstream debate. The threat to the Republic and French democracy was thus not to be sought within the failure of mainstream parties, but rather in the exaggeration of the 'success' of the FN, and in turn in the legitimisation of its discourse as a prominent political alternative.

As it seemed to triumph over fascism in 2002, the Republican Front and the legitimation of the FN as the alternative to 'politics as usual' made Nicolas Sarkozy an appealing candidate on the right. Sarkozy's aims were clear: no more compromises with the old order; he would instead choose to bring FN voters back to his party even if it meant he had to go and get them 'one by one' (Sarkozy 2006). By positioning himself in opposition to the establishment, despite being very much part of it, Sarkozy successfully appealed to many of those who had chosen the FN as a protest vote, and in doing so dealt a lethal blow to the Republican Front. His insistence on breaking taboos freed much of the neo-racist discourse central to the FN's strategy, particularly with regard to Islam. The presence of the Republican Front had not negated racism in its many guises, but prior to the arrival of Sarkozy, such utterances had remained marginal and overwhelmingly condemned in the mainstream political discourse, albeit useful to appeal to parts of the electorate (Mondon 2013: 7–8).

The creation of what Thomas Deltombe termed 'Imaginary Islam' can be traced back to the 1970s (Deltombe 2005; see also Hajjat and Mohammed 2013); however, its positioning as the natural enemy of the secular Republic in the mainstream discourse fully took hold in the 2000s. Following the polemics around the same issue in 1989 and 1994, the 2004 law on 'conspicuous' religious symbols in schools was not so much about secularism as it was about an essentialised view of Islam: Muslim communities were assumed to be worthy of suspicion and those most affected were not given the space to express concerns or agency (Tévanian et al. 2008). As highlighted by Pierre Tévanian amongst others, this was very much a non-issue at the time, since

"the number of headscarf-related disputes, according to the French Ministry of Education, fell from 300 in 1994 to 150 in 2003 [with] 146 of these incidents quickly resolved through compromise" (Tévanian 2005). Nevertheless, the Republic and secularism increasingly became repressive tools used to entrench discrimination, in opposition to more emancipatory meanings (Mondon 2015). Mention of *laïcité* and the law of 1905 on the separation of church and state no longer referred to the text itself and its focus on the protection of individual rights. Both were used to pursue some identitarian project based on an imagined clash of civilisations. Such debates were reminiscent of the *mission civilisatrice* central to the French colonial project and processes and to the Third Republic's self-righteous outlook on the world and its duties to civilise all, even against their will. It is telling that when the 2010 law against the burka was passed in France, the office of Éric Besson, then Minister of Immigration and National Identity, commented that this law was necessary for "life in society and civilisation to be explained" to those guilty of wearing the attire (Leprince 2010). Nuance was nowhere to be seen; Republican emancipation was to be imposed and agency limited to those like 'us'.

In a global context where Islam was constructed as the global threat, Sarkozy's campaigns and presidency normalised this neo-racist perspective in much of the political discourse in France. He brought with his leadership of the centre-right UMP two elements central to this mainstreaming. On the one hand, contrary to his predecessors and mainstream opponents, his use of such tropes was unrepentant and his stance based on the constant struggle against so-called 'political correctness' and taboos imposed by a self-righteous elite. On the other hand, while much of his discourse on immigration and Islam was borrowed from the FN's repertoire, his position as leader of a mainstream party and his subsequent presidency added legitimacy to such themes and gave them an aura of authority and acceptability, if not normalcy. For Sarkozy, the Republic was no longer the rampart against the extreme right, but a nationalist project based on an emotional attachment to *la patrie*: "to become French is to subscribe to a form of civilisation, values and mores" (Sarkozy 2009).

Sarkozy's discursive strategy based on nationalism and the stigmatisation of Islam proved successful in 2007,[4] but played a part in his demise in 2012 as he was ultimately unable to satisfy the deeply divided parts of his electorate. By the end of his presidency, Sarkozy had

shifted the line between what was acceptable and what was not, what could be discussed and envisaged by the President, what was taboo and what was the new normal. In his attempt to outbid the FN in promising that no debate would be out of bounds for his government, Sarkozy allowed for extreme right discourse to both gain an increased amount of coverage and, more importantly, to become part of the Republican and democratic sphere from which it had been excluded since the Second World War. In 2012, Sarkozy could break the ultimate Republican taboo, saying what no other mainstream party's leader had dared and what the media in unison had revolted against in 2002: that the FN was part of the 'Republic'; it was a 'democratic' party (Mondon 2013).

As the Republican Front weakened, the FN evolved. In the twenty-first century, and even more so under the new leadership of Marine Le Pen, the party has continued to redefine its discourse, if not its ideology, in its ongoing attempt to reclaim key concepts of the French national psyche (Crépon et al. 2015). This change required a refining of the old narratives that had been core to Jean-Marie Le Pen's politics, placing him throughout his political life as the 'outsider'. The rise of Islamophobia within the mainstream allowed the FN to join the Republican camp and to reshape key concepts such as *laïcité* in its own image. Marine Le Pen has thus positioned herself as champion of the hegemonic values seemingly abandoned by mainstream parties, forcing them in turn to toe the line. This shift has seen a further escalation in the 'vocabulary war' the party launched in the late 1980s, under the influence of *Nouvelle droite* think tanks and their right-wing appropriation and use of Antonio Gramsci's theories. In her counter-hegemonic struggle, Marine Le Pen has made the themes of the Republic and secularism central to her discourse: the Republic is now understood as the nation in the traditional extreme right manner, and secularism as the weapon against the divisions caused by the nation's new primary enemy: Islam.

The rise of the secularist crusaders: Islam versus freedom of speech

The growing acceptance of liberal Islamophobia in France and the West in general was greatly aided by the rise of media-savvy commentators whose broad access to a mainstream media hungry for cheap polemics has allowed them to publicise their message. Somewhat ironically, self-appointed rebels and taboo-breakers such as Éric

Zemmour have benefited from the support of most mainstream TV channels, magazines, radios, newspapers and publishing companies to convince their audience that it was censorship which had prevented their argument from being discussed, rather than because it was simply wrong and retrograde. As a result of this disproportionate coverage, an array of reactionary ideas have made their way back from the margins, and have targeted groups whose demands for equal treatment were turned into attacks against 'our' values and civilisation. Through a recasting of 'our' history, the West is no longer described as the cradle of equal rights, but as the greatest civilisation put in jeopardy by so-called minorities, and aided by a self-righteous and self-loathing intelligentsia. If 'our' great achievements are to be saved from destruction, then those trying to divide us must no longer be allowed to demand emancipation. In this apocalyptic argument, Muslims, loosely defined, have come to play the part of the invader, whose culture and laws are to replace ours. When pushed to its extreme, women and homosexuals are equally characterised as enemies from the inside, whose demands for equality have led to a feminisation of society, which has in turn facilitated the invasion of virile barbarians (Zemmour 2006). While the most extreme forms of such illiberal Islamophobia, sexism and homophobia remain theoretically anchored in the extreme right, and are as such denounced by much of the media, the spectral presence of an imagined homogeneous and politically unified Muslim community has become a mainstream concern in France and Europe.

This was made clear in 2005 when the editors of Danish conservative newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* asked cartoonists to submit a picture of the Prophet Mohammed, something which is discussed at length in Carolina Sanchez Boe's chapter. This was rationalised with claims that a Danish author had been unable to find someone to illustrate his children's book as potential artists feared reprisals. Despite having contacted forty-two cartoonists, only twelve drawings were submitted, some of which criticised the newspaper's stance (Klausen 2009). Yet what was supposed to be 'a summer-time prank' soon created a media storm. Fleming Rose, the editor of the newspaper, claimed that the aim of the cartoons' publication was to test "the boundaries of censorship in a time of war" (Battaglia 2006: 29). For Rose, freedom of expression was under threat, and the war analogy resonated within part of the French elite who had just passed and supported the banning of the hijab in schools. For Ferruh Yilmaz, *Jyllands-Posten* was

> extremely successful in (a) creating an intense debate that can easily be described as a 'moral panic' about Islam's compatibility with 'Western' values, (b) making freedom of speech the central question in the debate, and (c) mobilising sides on the basis of Muslim and Western 'identities,' regardless of what their own identifications and arguments are otherwise. (Yilmaz 2011: 11)

In France, the battle against perceived religious censorship helped rekindle the idea of a glorious past when a fantasised version of the nation was the vanguard of universal (secular) emancipation. The fact that secular France is no longer threatened by an all-powerful Catholic church has been lost on the new soldiers of the secularist crusade. Their enemy instead is a minority, and one that is constantly and systematically discriminated against. This is particularly striking with regard to the very argument about freedom of speech which excludes opponents of the caricatures, whatever their rationale, as "it becomes clear that, dissenters, or the 'censors', are posited as illegitimate in their claim to legal recourse, immoral in their attack on the public good, and undemocratic in their politics" (Battaglia 2006: 29).

The cartoons affair therefore allowed right-wing voices to rework their neo-racist argument into part of the fuzzy Enlightenment project: the new crusades would be between innately reactionary Muslims and indiscriminately progressive Western societies. This line of argument was extremely successful, creating deep divisions within and throughout the left as intellectuals and activists wrongly felt forced to choose between secularism and racism: in order to defend universalism and secularism, the essentialisation and exclusion of part of the population were deemed necessary. The choice was a false flag, as pointedly argued by Christine Delphy with regard to sexism and racism (Delphy 2006). It was in this context that *Charlie Hebdo*, a niche left-wing libertarian weekly magazine whose financial situation at the time was dire, decided to republish the cartoons in support of freedom of speech (Miera and Sala Pala 2009). The solidarity expressed by a French left-wing magazine with a right-wing newspaper in Denmark demonstrated that the fight against Islam trumped any other political consideration.

Large parts of the left and their uncritical support of secularism and the Enlightenment were therefore caught on the wrong side of a debate led by the right and based on the neo-racist essentialisation of the Muslim community. As highlighted by Adria Battaglia in the case of

the United States, "the narrative becomes a hegemonic device, or a way of controlling how [we] view the debate: this is an issue of protecting our freedoms, not recognizing that our freedoms are not equally shared amongst all people" (Battaglia 2006). This was equally applicable to the situation in France, where complaints about the cartoons were ignored or denounced without any consideration of their relevance with regard to the legal system. For Pascal Mbongo (2007: 147), the filing of a complaint against *Charlie Hebdo*'s publication of the cartoons should not have been problematic since it was received by the tribunal as valid, even though the magazine was later found not guilty. Therefore, while various Muslim and anti-racist associations placed the fight against intolerance and racism within the Republican jurisdiction, they were nonetheless considered as the enemies of a mythological vision of *laïcité*. Furthermore, as they virulently denounced the associations for what they argued was a religious trial, the so-called defenders of freedom of speech failed to acknowledge that *Charlie Hebdo* was sued for only three of the cartoons, which they did not attack as blasphemous, but rather as incitement to racial hatred (Miera and Sala Pala 2009: 398).

The debate about freedom of speech was no longer about whether it is even possible in a deeply unequal society where public discourse is within the reach of very few. Instead, the discussion centred on the necessity to uphold absolute freedom of speech against one particular threat. The racist rationale behind the publication of the cartoons, and more importantly behind the support *Charlie Hebdo* received – from the left in particular – was clear. The publication of the cartoons and their defence had little to do with freedom of speech; it was yet another attack on Islam and anyone even remotely associated with the religion. As Roy et al. argued:

> No major newspaper would publish cartoons mocking blind people, dwarfs, homosexuals or Roma people, more because they fear bad taste than because of potential legal pursuits. But bad taste does not seem to be an issue with Islam because public opinion is more permeable to Islamophobia (which often hides behind a rejection of immigration). One can make jokes about Muslims we would not make about others. What shocks Muslim people is not the way the Prophet is portrayed but rather that there are double standards. (Roy et al. 2006: 323)

Charlie Hebdo's supporters claimed that the magazine was an equal opportunity offender, but failed to acknowledge the relative power (or powerlessness) of targets, and the potential impact on Muslims and Muslim communities came at a time of growing Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate throughout politics, media and civil society, often cloaked in such liberalism. It is this context that lent itself to the power and popularity of the images and provided a ready-made framing and response for the 'Islam versus Western liberal values/freedom of speech' discourse.

Islamophobia in mainstream French politics: the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks and their aftermath

While the liberal form of Islamophobia, pitting a progressive West against a reactionary Islam, has become increasingly prevalent in France, the series of attacks that have taken place since January 2015 have made the distinction between liberal and illiberal forms in the mainstream increasingly blurry. After the November 2015 attacks in which 130 were killed, most politicians reiterated that France was 'at war', something highlighted by former Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin (Huet 2015). The then Prime Minister Manuel Valls (*L'Obs* 2012) went as far as discussing the 'enemy within' – a phrase with clear connotations with the Second World War. Still reminiscent of France's darkest hours, prominent politicians on the right called for any suspect to be imprisoned without trial in 'interment camps' (Clavel 2015). By responding in such a violent manner, French politicians have played right into the hands of terrorists (Benzine 2016). They have provided Islamic State with the opportunity to stand falsely righteous when the inevitable civilian casualties will be found under the rubble left by French bombs. Strengthening further the state of suspicion towards Muslim communities, the attacks on the Bataclan and wider sites of Parisian nightlife were taken by some to represent an attack by Muslims on the liberal culture and lifestyle of the young in France (Saadia 2015). However, while this liberal version of Islamophobia prevailed after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks, the element of repetition and the apparent failure of the government to protect its citizens have rendered illiberal discourses and measures increasingly prevalent.

It was thus not surprising that terrorism, retaliation and securitisation were central to the reaction to the 14 July attack in Nice. The defence of so-called liberal values was no longer the focus of political discourses,

and the false unity which had brought most politicians together after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks was replaced by a race to the bottom in relation to both Muslims and liberty. Despite a clear lack of evidence during the early stages of the investigation, the government and opposition denounced a terrorist attack and demanded ever more stringent measures to be implemented. Positioning himself for the 2017 presidential election as the alternative to the Front National, Nicolas Sarkozy demanded that all suspects of terrorism be given an electronic bracelet (Laurent 2016). While this measure was already considered ineffective at the time and thus sheer demagoguery, it was further discredited on 26 July as the bearer of such a device murdered a priest and gravely injured another parishioner.

However, far from discouraging an ever more brutal discussion of the situation in France, the opposition continued to push for more securitisation. Sarkozy soon declared that this latest attack "show[ed] the extent to which we must change the scale of our retaliation to Islamist terrorism" (Bordenave et al. 2016). This may mean extraordinary measures, be they against the constitution: "our system must protect potential victims rather than probable perpetrators of a future terrorist attack". In this demagogic and increasingly authoritarian climate, the government's call for unity and use of '*our* democracy as shield' failed to convince (Bekmezian 2016). Hollande declared that "restraining our liberties and infringing upon our constitution would not be efficient in the struggle against terrorism and would weaken the all so precious cohesion of our nation. Our country must avoid indulging in one-upmanship, polemics, amalgams, suspicions' (ibid.). This shift in discourse demonstrated the tensions between the illiberal and liberal strategies the government had been trying to balance. As the President demanded calm, unity and respect of *our* rights and freedoms and Prime Minister Valls denounced the 'Trumpisation of minds', the government extended the state of emergency until January 2017 and implemented further anti-terrorist legislation despite their clear inefficacy and their discriminatory nature, at the expense of more long-term policies tackling the socio-economic roots of the problem (Bredoux 2016). Illiberalism, previously the extreme right form of anti-Muslim hate, but replaced by the increasingly mainstream liberal Islamophobia targeting the so-called illiberalism of Islam and Muslims, was now the state's response to terror in defence of liberal values.

And it has been as ineffective as it is contradictory. In February 2016, Amnesty International (2016) highlighted that only one person had been arrested on terrorism charges, out of 3,210 often violent interventions. Again, the government's reaction played right into the hands of so-called Islamic State as such policies and the associated rhetoric were likely to feed into their propaganda machine, as they will no doubt highlight the unfair treatment Muslims are subjected to in France. In a long opinion piece in the *Journal du Dimanche*, five days after the Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray attack, Valls (2016) pushed the contradictions in the government's discourse further, calling for a rebuilding of the Islam of France, praising the second religion in France for having "found its place in the Republic" and telling Muslims indiscriminately that they "have an immense responsibility to uphold".

Conclusion

Islamophobia and racism more generally have been part of the Republican narrative for a long time in France. However, with the sanitisation of the Front National and the mainstreaming of many of its ideas by politicians, the media and pundits, seeing Islam and Muslims, however loosely defined, as suspicious has become commonplace in elite discourse. In the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in January 2015, France appeared falsely unified in its defence of freedom of speech and other liberties seen as central to the French Republican culture, identity and democracy, despite early moves from the state to increase security measures and curtail basic rights. The subsequent attacks in Paris in November 2015 and in Nice and Normandy in July 2016 shifted the balance in the struggle between Republican liberalism and its associated form of Islamophobia and reactionary forces (acknowledging as we have that the two were always intertwined), as, at the same time, securitisation, a state of war and emergency, the introduction of a National Guard, and hardened positions became central to much of the public discourse.

What also cannot be ignored in these responses is that France was preparing for the 2017 presidential elections, and that three of the main candidates – Hollande, Sarkozy and Le Pen – were playing each other off and appealing to their constituencies as well as trying to capture more of the vote. Perhaps most striking in this context has been Marine Le Pen's behaviour in the aftermath of the attacks. As mainstream politicians attempted to outbid each other in a race

towards securitisation and suspicion, at the expense of civil liberties and fostering further discrimination against Muslim communities, Le Pen has steered away from polemical grounds and simply claimed that mainstream politicians have failed in their duty to protect their citizens. Having poorly navigated the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack, setting herself and her party apart from the unified movement, she became much more cautious in her approach. After the Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray attack, Le Pen appeared even more moderate than the *Républicain* opposition, declaring that the rule of law should be respected.

Despite this, it is clear that these attacks have shifted the political debate further to the right. It seems that the pre-campaign has been increasingly fought on the right's territory: the Socialist party appears to have given up on inclusive politics and forfeited its alternative position to the Front National, and much of what has been discussed and proposed on both sides of the mainstream political spectrum since the attacks could just as well be borrowed from their programme.

Notes

1 While the attack also included targets such as a Jewish grocer in Paris, this chapter focuses on the role of the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* and discourses surrounding freedom of speech and 'Je Suis Charlie'.

2 Only Arlette Laguiller from the Trotskyite *Lutte Ouvrière* refused to give her support to Jacques Chirac in the second round.

3 *Paris Match*, 2, 9 and 16 May 2002.

4 Surveys suggested that between 21 and 38 per cent of Le Pen's 2002 electorate voted for Sarkozy in the first round of the 2007 elections (Evans and Ivaldi 2007). In the second round, two-thirds of Le Pen's voters transferred to the UMP candidate (Shields 2010).

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